



**EUROMIL aisbl**  
(European Organisation of  
Military Associations and Trade  
Unions)  
Rond-Point Robert Schuman 6  
E-mail: euromil@euromil.org  
N° Ent.: 0538.809.759

## **Fair Defence Pay Campaign: Final Report**

### **I. Background of the campaign**

EUROMIL observed in recent years, but most notably in the first half of 2019 that military personnel's salaries and allowances, linked to working conditions and problems with recruitment and retention are high on the agenda of almost all its members.

The continued decreasing of defence budgets in recent years has affected military salaries and allowances in a negative way in many countries. Military personnel all over Europe had to learn that their salaries and allowances had either been frozen or even decreased. In addition, due to a lack of available funds, equipment and working conditions in many European militaries deteriorated.

It is only in the past months that governments started to increase defence budgets and thus lifted the freezing of salaries and allowances.

### **II. Configuration of the campaign**

EUROMIL launched a campaign to raise awareness about the current situation on pay and allowances in the European armed forces, taking into account the difficulty to compare salaries throughout Europe, as salaries and living standards differ throughout European states.

One of the main objectives of EUROMIL during this campaign was to advocate for military personnel to receive at least a salary which is comparable to the levels of payments in public services.

The campaign ran from 25 October 2019 to 24 April 2020 and was launched with a video message from the EUROMIL Board calling for a fair pay in the defence sector.

A campaign event page was created on the EUROMIL website, explaining the rationale and aim of the campaign. It included a campaign logo and visuals linked to the campaign, as well as country profiles that were



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created to raise awareness about the current pay situation in the armed forces of certain European countries. In order to establish country profiles, EUROMIL member associations were requested to provide data on the situation in their respective country. The country profiles are available on the following link: <http://euromil.org/the-fair-defence-pay-campaign/>.

Furthermore, the campaign took place on social media (Facebook and Twitter), for which particular visuals were created as well as a hashtag: #FairDefencePayCampaign. These were used by both EUROMIL and its member associations.

In addition to the internal survey, EUROMIL launched an **open survey on social media** to hear the voice of the general public on this issue. This second survey ran from 9 January 2020 to 16 March 2020.

### III. Outcomes

#### 1. Internal survey

Based on the data provided by member associations, EUROMIL published **11** country profiles on its campaign webpage: Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain.

Data showed that in **8** (out of 11) European countries, namely **Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia and Spain**, salary of military personnel is lower than civilian state employees in the public sector<sup>1</sup>.

On the contrary, **3** (out of 11) countries answered differently:

- military personnel in **Belgium** receives a salary that is similar to public sector salaries;
- military personnel in **Italy** receives a salary that is slightly higher than public sector salaries;

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<sup>1</sup> More details available on: <http://euromil.org/the-fair-defence-pay-campaign/>.



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- military personnel in **Slovakia** receives a salary that is higher than public sector salaries<sup>2</sup>.

Concerning the negotiating process on salaries and allowances, **ACMP-CGPM (Belgium), CS (Denmark), ZVSR (Slovakia), MARVER-FNV and AFMP-FNV (the Netherlands)** answered that, according to their country legislation on trade-unionism, they are consulted to determine salaries.

On the contrary, **CAOA (Cyprus), PFEARFU (Greece), ASSODIPRO (Italy), AUME and ATME (Spain), ANS, AOFA and AP (Portugal)** are not.

In particular:

- CAOA (Cyprus) pointed out that consultations depend on the situation: sometimes they are not aware about the salaries issues.
- PFEARFU (Greece) is demanding social dialogue for salaries and allowances.
- AUME (Spain) underlined that, although law in Spain does not allow a military association to negotiate with the government or the Minister of Defence, they presented proposals to the political parties through the COPERFAS (Council of Personnel of Spanish Armed Forces) on wages.

Particular negotiating processes on salaries are instead the ones underway in Ireland and in Serbia:

- In **Ireland**, both **RACO** and **PDFORRA** attend national pay talks. However, due to the complete dominance of the Public Sector Unions with a right to strike, they get very little if any traction at national pay talks. RACO specified that *"individual unions have secured further increases by means of 'side-deals' with their local management which are then revealed and endorsed as part of the overall national pay agreement. The lack of side-deals for*

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*commissioned officers has resulted in RACO seeking the setting up of an independent statutory (annual) Pay Review Body”.*

- In **Serbia, NEZAVISNOST** is negotiating with the Ministry of Defence on the method of calculation and the amount of salary and allowances. However, *“since 2014 all legal provisions regarding salaries and allowances are not binding on the employer. The most characteristic example is the avoidance of the employer to comply with the law governing the method of determining the base for calculation of wages, which regulates that it should not be less than 75% of the average monthly salary in the Republic of Serbia. Two years ago, the said provision was reorganised so that the employer could apply it according to the above. There will be soon an amendment that will release the employer from the obligation to determine the amount of the base on a monthly basis”.*

## 2. Online survey

EUROMIL received answers to the online survey from 691 participants from **8** European countries, namely **Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Serbia and Spain.**

Data gathered from the online survey showed that the larger percentage of people in the 8 aforementioned countries believes the following:

- military personnel’s salaries do not properly match efforts and sacrifices soldiers do to defend their country;
- military personnel should receive at least a salary which is comparable to the levels of payments in public services of a same European country;
- an increase of military personnel’s salaries and allowances - as well as equipment and working conditions – are relevant issues to be taken into consideration in the framework of the defence budgets increase;
- an increase of military personnel’s salaries and allowances represents a source of attractiveness in the military career.



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#### IV. Recommendations

In light of these outcomes, EUROMIL issues some recommendations.

Firstly, EUROMIL recalls that in order to defend their working and social conditions, such as the wage system, members of the armed forces should be granted the right to freedom of association without restriction. This implies the right of everyone to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his or her interests. EUROMIL thus calls on states to allow members of the armed forces to establish and join a trade union representing their interests;

Secondly, EUROMIL calls on states to involve (military) trade unions, once established, in a well-regulated dialogue with the political and military authorities and grant military personnel the right to bargain collectively, this means entitling them to have the right to negotiate and conclude collective binding agreements at the appropriate levels. Working together, in a spirit of mutual trust and respect, is beneficial for military personnel as well as for the armed forces as such. Indeed, EUROMIL considers collective bargaining as the basic instrument to negotiate salaries of military personnel at the national level and to make valuable changes on the human, social and working aspects of defence.

Thirdly, as EUROMIL believes that military personnel should have the same rights and obligations as any other citizens, it is unacceptable that military personnel are paid less than the civilian employees in the public sector. EUROMIL advocates for a military salary to be at least comparable to the levels of payments in public services.

Finally, low pay represents one of the major challenges for the recruitment and retention of armed forces personnel. EUROMIL thus calls on states to raise salaries and consequently improve the attractiveness of the military career. In overall, EUROMIL demands an investment in the working conditions of military personnel, including salaries and allowances, in the framework of the defence budgets increase.